

## **Eco-friendly Industry**

### County takes progressive stance on biofuel

By Nathan Brown

Biofuels and eco-friendly energy sources are the wave of the future. When the state's commissioner of agriculture wanted to see an example of how biofuels are produced, he came to Catawba County to see how it's done.

Steve Troxler, North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture, spent Tuesday visiting the Catawba County Regional EcoComplex and Resource Recovery facility and the Piedmont Turf Farm in Catawba County.

Troxler said he was excited to see both of the complexes in operation because it gives him an idea of the trends occurring in agricultural development.

"Biofuels and renewable energy sources are a growing market in farming and agricultural businesses," he said. "Renewable fuels are one of our focuses and if agriculture can help lessen our dependence on foreign oil, then I'm all for it!"

Barry Edwards, Catawba County director of utilities and engineering, said the eco-complex essentially produces energy from methane from the gases released in the Catawba County Blackburn landfill, which is converted to methane to run three large generators capable of producing enough energy to run 350 homes each. These generators run the operations at the complex. Other operations include bio-solids management, in which garbage is 'digested' and the gases produced by the waste is extracted for energy.

"The Eco-Complex is designed to accommodate research into all aspects related to bio-dominant energy recovery and utilization." Edwards said.

Troxler said agriculture is the number one business in North Carolina, contributing \$68 billion to the state economy every year.

"This is exactly why I enjoy Farm-City week," Troxler said. "When you have two percent of the population feeding the other 98 percent, it's easy to forget that and we tend to take it for granted. This week is always a good opportunity for city folks to meet with our brethren in the agricultural field and better understand the future of agribusiness and trends."

Troxler also toured the Piedmont Turf Farm, where grass is grown into strips and used in private and commercial lawns.

Troxler spoke at a dinner on Tuesday, where he shared his vision for the future of agriculture in North Carolina and Catawba County. He provided inside information on the changes being made at the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to help meet the needs of both the agricultural community and consumers.